

Department of Land and Natural Resources

Sustainability Hotspot

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KONA COAST

~Big Island of Hawaii~



Top to bottom: The crystal clear waters of the Kona Coast, marine life in Kealakekua Bay, even the rocks are alive along the shoreline at Kiholo, a pond at Kawili Point at Mahaiula.

The coral reef ecosystem along the Kona Coast of the Big Island is one of the most spectacular marine areas in the State. Because of its calm and pristine waters, and its natural beauty, the Kona Coast is experiencing increasing use by both residents and tourists.

The reefs in Hawaii are a major part of the ocean recreation industry, generating millions of dollars in revenue each year. They protect our shoreline and have been, historically, a source for food, jewelry, tools and building materials to the Hawaiian culture.

It is quite obvious the coral reef ecosystem, the main reason why we call Hawaii the “Ocean State,” is highly significant. However, the carrying capacity of this and other coastal areas is largely unknown, and coral may be at risk of serious depletion and damage.

DLNR’s Sustainability Hotspot Team for the Kona Coast:

Robert T. Nishimoto - Aquatic Resources, Big Island, 974-6202;

Jeff Bearman - Boating and Ocean Recreation;

Reginald Lee - Conservation and Resources Enforcement;

is charged with the protection and management of this magnificent resource for the future enjoyment and use of generations to come.

DLNR’s Vision for the Future and How to Attain It

Establishment of marine reserves offers many advantages. It provides a natural, undisturbed area for the protection of reproductive adults and a reservoir for eggs and larvae for dispersal to other areas. Also, by establishing a reserve, DLNR can work toward resolving user conflicts and set criteria to monitor the natural marine population.

DLNR can work toward its vision of the future, establishment of a Kona Coast Marine Reserve, by:

- adding two Fishery Technicians and one clerk;
- acquiring vehicles, office space and office equipment;
- acquiring necessary field equipment.

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Top to bottom: Fourth grade students fishing at Kona Coast State Park, a view over the reef at Waialea, friendly fishes cleaning a turtle at Honokohau's Turtle Rock, Kealakekua Bay and the Captain Cook Monument.

Total start-up cost for this program would be \$260,000 in the first year and substantially less for annual costs in successive years.

The Kona Coast of the Big Island is being considered for establishment of a reserve because of lessons learned in similar aquatic hotspots like Waikiki and Hanauma Bay on Oahu. DLNR is striving to insure Hawaii has “**fish for the future.**” New lessons learned from the Kona Coast case study will benefit areas like the South Maui Coastline where the marine ecosystem is also threatened. 🌺



DLNR's Hotspot Team for the Kona Coast (l-r): Nishimoto, Bearman, Lee.